COLYTON
HERITAGE CENTRE

a. Merchant's House
Market Place
Colyton
Devon
EX24 6JR
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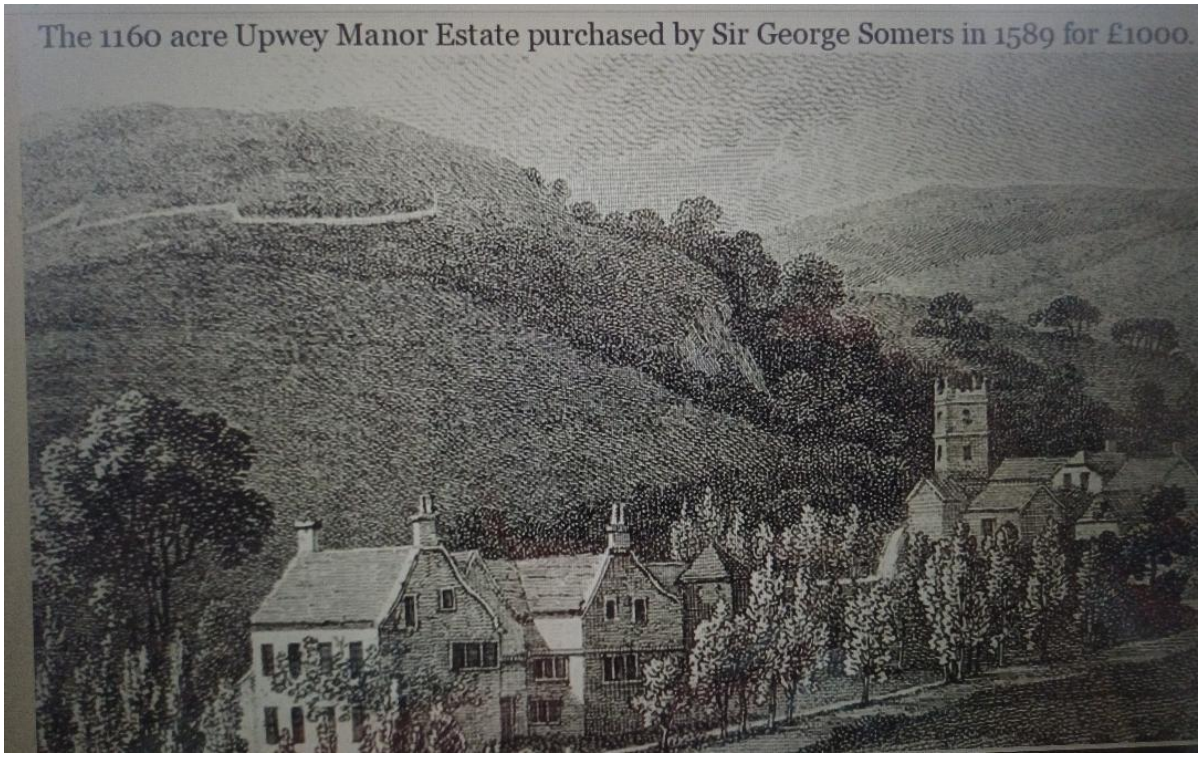
19 February 2025

Colyton Parish History Society Newsletter

Thanks for your feedback on our Newsletter and FB page and for your help with the stories we feature. Do keep these coming and if anyone would like to write me a piece on an aspect of local history which interests them please do so. We have had some helpful leads on last month's tale of evacuee Lesley Jarman– see contribution from Hugh Westacott below. And Tony Robinson has a new query about Pottlelake crosses.

1. News –

a. Seeking Upwey



Upwey estate purchased by Sir George Somers (1)

As many of you know I have spent the past six years writing a book about Sir Thomas Gates who was born here in Colyton in 1561 and grew up to become Governor of Virginia. While I am waiting for my book to be edited I have been chasing up loose ends. I knew Sir George Somers from Lyme Regis, who was with Gates on the *Sea Venture* when it was wrecked on the coral reefs of Bermuda in 1609, had a large estate at Berne Manor in Whitchurch Canonicorum in Dorset.

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However, with the £8000 proceeds of his successful privateering expeditions against the Spanish in the 1580s, Somers also purchased the Manor of Upwey which I was curious to see. Upwey lies between Dorchester and Weymouth.

I descended from the Ridgeway via steeply folded green hills into Upwey, from where the bubbling river Wey energetically meanders down to Weymouth and the sea six miles away. The first thing that surprised me was how many large and imposing historic houses – some built from local stone from the quarry behind the church - could be seen bordering narrow Church Street as it winds its way for a mile beside the river from one end of this little village to the other. There is a 13th century church of St Laurence and a wishing well – marking the source of the river Wey. I parked and set off to explore.

I stopped a man in the street and enquired if he could point me in the right direction. He couldn't but kindly offered another story - that house he said pointing was prepared for King Henry VIII to come and stay but he never came. He also told me that in addition to Upwey Manor there used to be another manor house in the village but could provide no further information.

Walking around I found the entrance to Upwey House and also an Upwey Manor as well as Bayard Farm, the old Mill which featured in Thomas Hardy's *The Trumpet Major* and stately Westbrooke House. But further research soon revealed that none of these could have been the house that George Somers acquired as they were built or rebuilt years later. Grade II* listed Upwey Manor for example was commissioned in 1639 which is too late, Sir George having died on Bermuda in 1610! After a bit more online research over delicious coffee and cake in the garden shop tea room I discovered that it was Wabey House on Church Street which Sir George purchased. I went and took a picture.

There has been human settlement on this site since neolithic times and pieces of Roman pottery have been found in the grounds.(2) A substantial residence has stood there since Norman times. It was first acquired by George Somers in 1588 and purchased by him in 1598 (3) and later inherited by his nephew Matthew Somers who brought his body back from Bermuda to Whitchurch and sold on again by his successors in 1658. Further renovations have been made over the years and the current house dates largely from the Victorian era. Impressively, Dorset History Centre responded to my emailed query by return on Monday morning supplying copies of extracts from various documents. (4)

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Wabey House, Church Street, Upwey

By chance I discovered that Sir George was not the only sea captain to purchase property in Upwey from the proceeds of his successful privateering exploits! Sir Thomas Freke MP, another contemporary Stuart privateer and also a supporter of the Virginia Company, commissioned Westbrooke House with his profits. (4) Westbrooke House subsequently became a favourite place to stay for King George III. In another surprising twist my brother informs me the Charman family is related to the Freke family by marriage!

On my way home I stopped on top of the south Dorset Ridgeway from where in normal conditions there would be an amazing view to the south and out to sea. Unfortunately, in the enduring gloom one couldn't see that far. Sir George Somers once owned all the land running down into the valley from whence I'd just come and up towards Friar Waddon.

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I went for a quick walk along the Ridgeway and a kind man out walking his dogs pointed out Maiden Castle earthworks atop the next ridge to the north. He explained there was a roman road to the east and also told me that some Viking bodies had been discovered across the valley – minus their heads! It was thought they may have been human sacrifices! I also noticed a series of tumuli scattered across the fields and some excellent dry stone walling. Clearly this has been an area of human interest and habitation since the earliest times. It was very cold, grey and gloomy so I retraced my steps to the car and drove home. Amazing what you can learn on a short trip out!

View from south Dorset Ridgeway across to Maiden Castle

References

1. Charmouth and District in Elizabethan Times part 2 accessed online 18.02.25
2. *Wabey House,* Gwen Naylor*, Upwey Society* magazine, Spring 2013 pages 10 -12 Spring_2013.pdf accessed online 16.02.25
3. Legal documentation relating to Sir George Somers acquiring and purchasing land in the Manor of Upwey and Wabey House. Refs D-GOO 2853, 2859 and 2948 GOODDEN FAMILY OF UPWEY AND BROADWEY. Accessed online 16.02.25
4. Personal correspondence between myself and Dorset Heritage Centre 17 February 2025
5. History of Westbrooke House- *17th Century Dorset manor house goes on the market for £3million* | Daily Mail Online (accessed online 16.02.25)
6. *Upwey – Discovering the Ridgeway* 2018.05.31-7.-Upwey.pdf

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b. Pottlelake crosses - Do you know what they signify?

Tony Robinson has written:

"A friend recently contacted me to find out if I knew the meaning of the crosses on the end of place-name posts. These posts are not uncommon and they all seem to have the crosses on them.

Three examples are shown - all in the Umborne / Chapel Knap area. (The Pottlelake cross has faded but can just be made out on the end of the writing.)

Can anybody help? Do they signify a particular route? Are they of religious significance? I don't know the answer and nobody I've spoken to knows either. If all else fails, I shall try the County Council."

If you know what they mean please do let me know and I will pass the information back to Tony.

Ref:
POTTLELAKE CHAPEL, Colyton - 1333531 | Historic England accessed online 19.02.25

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c. Family enquiries – Update on Lesley Jarman story

Last month we reported on the request from Leslie Jarman's daughters for information about the time he spent here in Colyton 80 years ago. Hugh Westacott has been in contact with Katherine and Philippa to tell them about his own recollections of being an evacuee here during the war.

Hugh takes up the story: "Leslie, a pupil at St Jude's School arrived in Colyton with his sister Maisie as an evacuee in September 1939 and was compulsorily billeted with a butcher. At the time there were three butchers in the town T.White & Son (Edgar) in St Andrew's Square, F.C. Loud in Church Street at the junction with Fore Street (now Queen Street). Leslie used a bicycle to deliver meat for his host. Maisie was billeted at Colyton House.

It's known that Edgar White and his wife tried to adopt the evacuee who was billeted with them but he was not Leslie Jarman.

Does anyone know which butcher hosted Leslie or can provide any other recollections of the lad?"

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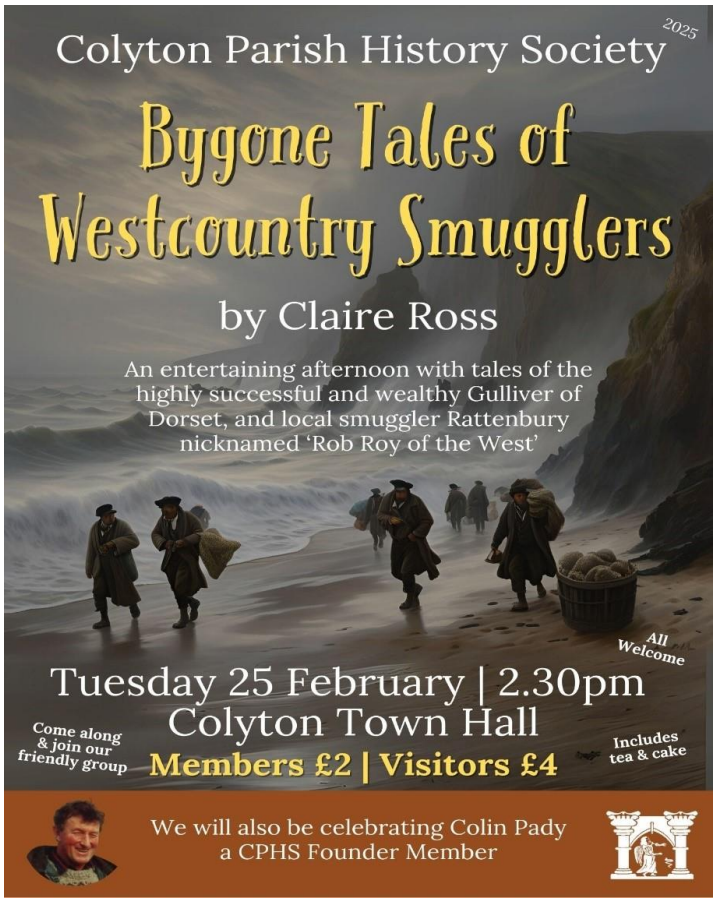
2. History Society News

a. Colyton Town walks -

Spring is coming and therefore Colyton's guided Town History walks/strolls will be starting again on **Thursday, April 10**, meeting in Dolphin Street carpark at 2.0pm, regardless of the weather.
No booking required. £5.00 per person.
As well as contributing to the CPHS funds, the walks help to keep Colyton on the map and spread the word of being a good place to visit. If you haven't been yet, do come and we are sure that you will learn something new about Colyton and its history.
If you are interested in joining our merry band of guides please contact Jane Dauncey 01297 552514.

b. History Society talks

i) **Reminder** Don't forget next week's talk about smuggling **Tuesday, 25 February at 2.30 pm** at Colyton Town Hall



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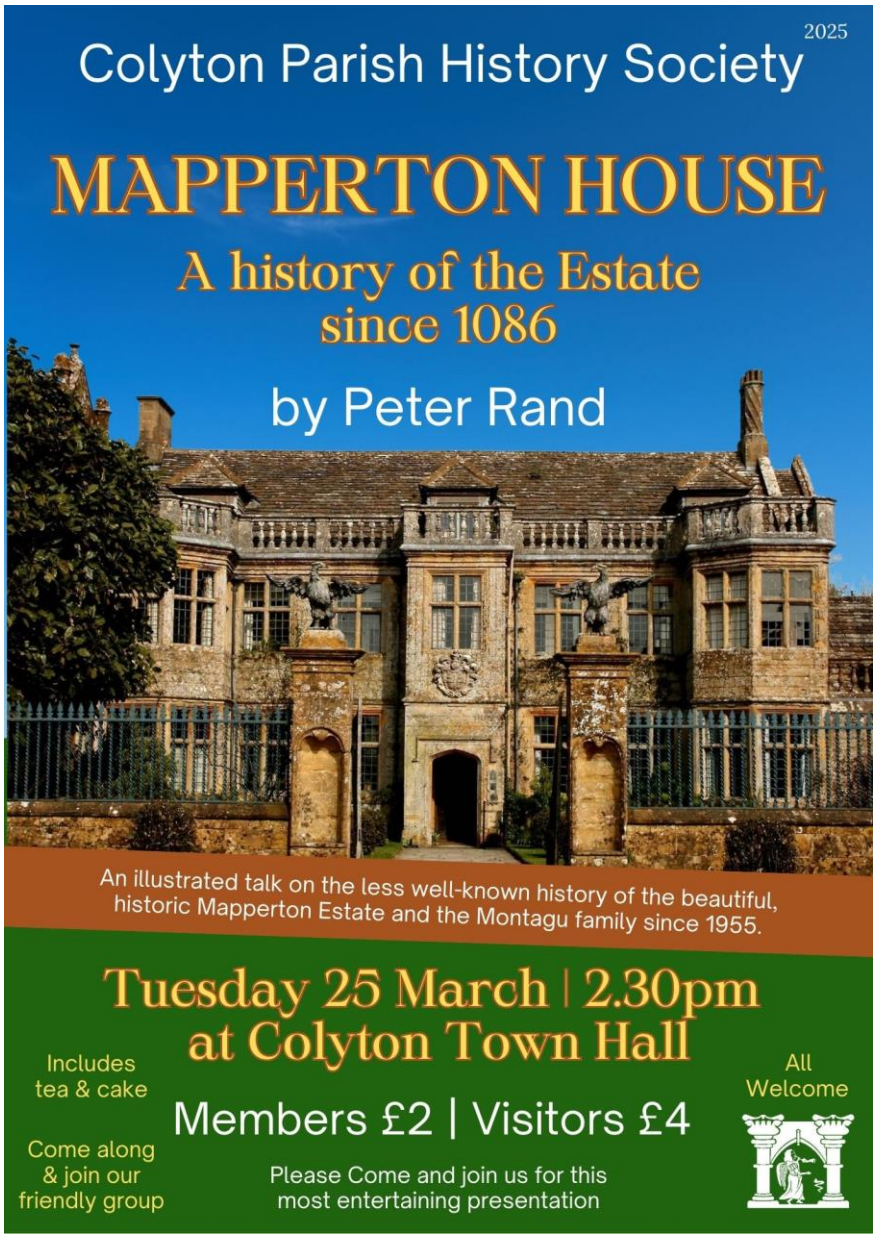
ii) March talk



c. **Membership – Reminder Annual Subscription due in January 2025**

A reminder that annual membership fees for 2025 are due from the beginning of January next year. The rate is unchanged at £8 for a single membership or £12 for a couple. Subscriptions can be paid at any Society meeting. Or they can be paid by standing order or BACS transfer using the following details: Colyton Parish History Society, Sort Code: 30-90-37, A/c no 00992240 (Lloyds Bank)

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3. Other organisations news and events

a. Axminster Heritage Centre

1. What's On - Axminster Heritage
2. Kate Adie talk

Heritage Alive Talks - Axminster Heritage

3. Axminster VE day 80th anniversary celebrations

Axminster set for 80th anniversary VE Day celebration | Midweek Herald

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b. Durham University courses

Durham University is offering online palaeography courses providing skills training to facilitate working with manuscripts, whether at graduate level or for those working in a professional environment as a librarian, archivist, etc. Feedback from former students highlights the quality and breadth of the content, the flexibility of the course and the opportunity to engage with a great range of optional videos.

The courses will run **31 March - 11 April**. These are online, full-time courses that consist of asynchronous content and daily live sessions, which are duplicated to allow students from multiple time zones to join. Students will receive feedback on a portfolio of transcriptions after the course, as well as continued access to the asynchronous material for two months. There are limited spaces (24 students per course) and applications are now open. We would appreciate it if you could circulate this announcement via your networks. Please get in touch if you have any questions or queries. The final **deadline for applications is 24 March 2025**, but we encourage early applications as places will be offered to successful candidates on a first-come, first-served basis. http://www.imemsdurhamlearn.com/

4. Items you may have missed

1. Colyton's rich historic past
   https://www.midweekherald.co.uk/news/24920588.colyton-devon-town-rich-historic-past/?ref=eb&nid=2397&block=article_block_a&u=26e309a1465491fa9108b8530c3bc91f&date=100225
2. Jurassic coast charity shutting permanently
   https://www.midweekherald.co.uk/news/24920631.devon-jurassic-coast-charity-permanently-shutting/?ref=eb&nid=2397&block=article_block_a&u=26e309a1465491fa9108b8530c3bc91f&date=100225
3. Sidmouth woman who played significant role in WW2 celebrates 100th birthday
   Sidmouth woman Joan Hardy 100th birthday celebrated | Sidmouth Herald
4. Disappearing Lyme talk
   Disappearing Lyme illustrated talk at Woodmead Hall | Midweek Herald
5. Seaton Museum's plans for the future
   COLUMN: Seaton Museum has great plans for the future | Midweek Herald
6. Bantham Estate bought by friend of Prince William
   Devon village bought by Prince William's mate in '£30million deal' - Devon Live
7. Historic England oppose homes on 'nationally important' land at Braunton
   Historic England oppose homes on 'nationally important' land - Devon Live
8. Thelma Hulbert Gallery reopens.
   Thelma Hulbert Gallery Honiton reopened with new exhibition | Midweek Herald

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